[ca. 1859 ?]

Introductory Lectures

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It is with various and conflicting emotions, that I enter upon the duties inaugurated here at this moment. Although accustomed, for many years, to the public and private preceptorship of medical students, the scene in which I meet you is not a familiar one — to me — nor, hardly so, to my colleagues. Yet, this absence of familiarity belongs to myself in so especial a manner, that I trust to meet with indulgence, for a brief period, in some considerations of a somewhat personal character.

Compelled, almost a year ago, by the necessity of seeking repose from professional exertion, to forsake for a time the labors performed in common with my associates in this faculty, and to become an exile from home, it has been my lot, in that interval, to traverse many & distant lands. From the shadow of the Memnonium, and the magnificent ruins of hundred-gated Thebes, to the banks of the classic Tiber, and the crowded thoroughfares of the world's mart

by the Thames, and the acropolis of the modern Athens of the North, I have mingled with men of almost all the races that people the earth. Thronging my memory now, pass, in motley procession, the Turban and Turk and the mitred Cardinal, — the martial array of France and the civic pomp of England: while tongues of the East and of the West, the North and the South, blend together, in ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ harmonious discord.

In thus making the acquaintance of the men, the manners, institutions and Society of ~~the contrasts of~~ the old world, — ~~the~~ comparison is naturally and almost inevitably suggested, between these and those of our own land. I hold it to be a legitimate as well as most interesting inquiry, how far this comparison can be ~~sustained without~~ disadvantage by the civilization of the new world, — looked upon by one who, from long absence, can withdraw himself as far as it is possible to do, from the partialities of country and of home. I hold it to be, moreover, an inquiry of some especial interest to medical men; since our science and ~~[illegible]~~ vocation are not like ourselves of local or recent birth and developement, — but are cosmopolitan: older and more remote in origin than the civilization of England, — or even than the power

of fallen Rome, of Greece; as old as the mysterious Temples and awful tombs whose remains lie yet along the shores of the ancient Nile.

If, then, as you will admit, it would be in vain to elaborate the steps of such an inquiry here, and now, — impossible to enter into a discussion of it within the limits of a single hour, you may yet pardon me if, without discussion, I venture upon an expression of opinion; upon the question, — What is the relative position of the American mind, as to capacity, culture, performance, and promise, compared with the mind of Europe, and of the East?

That opinion is, — and it has been formed not without thought, — that the American intellect is the peer, the equal, of the intellect of any other race or people whatever, upon the face of the globe. I do not say the superior, — it is not that I do not incline toward that judgment — nor that I do not believe it might readily meet with your acceptance; but because that inclination, and that readiness are so natural, as to be most wisely distrusted on my part. Nor, in all candour, could I state such an opinion at all, without some not unimportant qualification. In original superiority of organization, in potential capacity and endowment, I believe

the Shemitic race, as represented by the Arab, the Jew, and the Barber, to be the finest in the world. Of the nationalities prominent in modern civilization, under the light of Christianity, the most exquisite artistic sensibility and divinest creative power have been the envied gifts of the Italians. In mental endurance and grasp of acquisition, and perhaps in philosophic reach, the Germans have retained supremacy; and, in the first of these traits, at least, they are probably approached nearest by the English. Yet, the real equality of the American intellect and character, in the sphere of life, action, literature and science, with either of these, may be well asserted, in view of their prominent and familiar elements. The American mind is, in versatility, the most apt and varied; in inventiveness, by far the most fertile; and in activity, the most intense and perpetual, of all that "fret their little hour upon life's stage!" It is probable that to obtain the highest degree of comparative endurance, might require only the thorough maintenance of Discipline & self-constraint. The Science – (lecture class) & Medicine – Practice – & teaching abroad, & at home – injunction uttered by Napoleon III^d, in his first proclamation to the army of Italy, — might often be applied to Young America: "Défiez-vous d'un trop grand élan!" Be distrustful of too great impetuosity. Discipline is the great want of our nationality; discipline in the political arena, — discipline in our

ten thousand copied literature, — discipline in our sometimes crude, hasty, and imperfect science. The American people has, however, ethnologically, — the immense advantage of bearing, in its origin, grafted on the strongest stock of Europe, — the Teutonic, — with an after admixture of various races; mingled without restriction of caste or climate; so as to develope out of them a composite, combining the best characteristics of all.

I pass abruptly, gentlemen, as we are obliged to do, by our narrow limits of time, from this inviting theme, to the kindred one, — of the relative position of our American science; of the natural and medical sciences, as investigated and taught in this country and in Europe. And here, too, for the same reason it is necessary I am obliged to waive discussion, and venture upon a direct opinion; — however dogmatic or even pretentious it may appear. It is, in the first place, undoubted, — that, in Europe, — that is, at the present time, especially in England, France and Germany, there is a much larger class of highly accomplished and incessantly productive scientific men than in this country; that the standard of scientific education and reputation is higher, — and the requirements of scientific institutions of the first class more enlarged, and, perhaps, ~~should~~ more imperative than with us. That this is true of medical as well as of other scientific institutions, we must not, I think, hesitate

to admit. But, if so, it must be with the qualification, that it is not universal; there are grades and diversities of excellence there as well as here; and, the approach of American science to the European standard is rapidly advancing. Not long, may we hope, will the balance be so largely against us. Already, some most important contributions to the world's best knowledge have been made in the United States; and, as regards facilities for the most thorough education in any department, all the science of the old world is imported to us, fresh and perfect, with the speed of modern intercourse between nations.

This brings me to that part of the inquiry which is, after all, of the most immediate interest to us; in regard to the opportunities for thorough and complete medical education, in the new, as compared with the old world. I must answer the question upon this point, again, without much discussion. It is a query which may no doubt occur to many of you, — would it be possible to obtain in Paris, Vienna, Edinburgh, Dublin or London, a better preparation for the duties of the medical man, than in Philadelphia? My reply is, unequivocally, — that a sojourn in either, or, successively, in all, of those capitals, will be much more comparatively available for the final accomplishment of the teacher or medical litterateur, than for the furnishing of those

essential requisites which fit the ~~expert~~ student for the actual practice of medicine, surgery or obstetrics. I believe, in a word, — that, by proper industry, and with a sufficient extension of time, (which is as possible here as anywhere), a thorough and complete medical education, in the science and the art, such as will be most adapted to meet the wants and ensure the success of the practitioner, can be obtained in Philadelphia, as well as in any other part of the world!

After dealing in these somewhat bold and dogmatic enunciations, gentlemen, — it is with ~~somewhat of~~ hesitation, & almost with embarrassment, that I proceed to what appears to me to be another topic of appropriate character to this address.

It has been said already, that the scene in which we meet is not a familiar one. After ~~almost a year's~~ so long an absence, I return with a newly acquired facility for taking an independent and unbiassed view of the responsibilities devolving upon those engaged, here, in medical instruction; — and, an independent and unbiassed view, also, of the fitness for so high a task, of those with whom I find myself here surrounded and associated.

Never did I appreciate more highly than at this moment, the dignity, as well as accountability, of the medical instructor; remembering not only what the nature of his duty is, but by whom, and how, it has been performed, within the recollection of some, at least, of those now present. I am reminded that my immediate predecessor in the chair represented this hour, was, himself, one of the most finished medical scholars, and elegant of authors, that the profession in our country ~~our place~~ and times has produced; that this School has, as you will be told by one of my colleagues tomorrow, been sustained, from time to time, by the labors of other men of high ability and world-wide renown; and that in this city there has been, since the days of Rush, so distinguished a succession of medical teachers and practitioners, as to have made the title of the "Medical metropolis of the Union" not inappropriate.

In view of these things, it is not idly or with unconcern that, if my friends will pardon ~~my~~ such boldness and plain speaking, I look around me and ask, — how are we, of this Faculty, in this Institution, armed for the Serious Campaign before us? What is the capacity, and fitness of preparation, of those with whom I have the honor to be associated, for the arduous duties of instruction in the fundamental Sciences, and culminating art, of Medicine & Surgery? And yet, when I answer this question to myself, in the language only of candour and honest conviction, it must be said, that I believe they have not been, and will not be, found wanting. Allow me, if you please, in a very few sentences, to say why I am well satisfied of this, — and am proud of the position

I undeservedly hold in this Faculty.

Of its longest tried member, gentlemen, the distinguished Professor of Chemistry; I will venture to say, that if it is in the power of any one to accomplish the difficult task of interesting Medical Students in that complex science, and thoroughly imbuing their with its important principles and facts, it is done, and it will be done, by him; and that his method has a merit which, so far as I know, is almost peculiar; that of Diversity ~~his chemical instruction of~~ subject of all unnecessary and extraneous matter, and concentrating the attention of the student only upon such things as are essential to the Medical course, and to the medical man.

If a few more years may have gone over the head of our Professor of Obstetrics, it is not for this that I bespeak for him your strongest confidence; since the Dogma

that age and wisdom have any necessary connection, has been buried, some time ago, in the tombs of all the Capulets. "Nous avons changé tout cela." But I will say, gentlemen, because I know it, — that there is no more thorough, methodical, scientific, efficient and practical teacher of Obstetrics in the United States, (and, I believe, anywhere else), than my colleague in this faculty.

The chair of Surgery is held, also, by a gentleman, familiar with the teaching, and the practice, of the best and most renowned masters, in this country as well as in Europe; who, while ready at all times to do justice to the treatment of disease or injury by operative procedures, is yet fully convinced of, and able to inculcate, those principles of modern conservative surgery, which tend to make the knife & the écraseur the last resort, which holds the greatest triumph of the surgeon to be to preserve life or limb

without the shedding of a drop of blood.

The laborious and important department of Materia Medica is confided to the competent hands of my friend Professor Taggart, of Virginia, of whom I need say no more, than that he was brought up, faithfully and well, at the foot of the Gamaliel of American Medicine; the approaching retirement of whom, say, active duties from the practice he has so long and honorably performed, is a misfortune to the medical world; I allude to Professor Wood, of the University of Pennsylvania. May his mantle fall on not unworthy shoulders!

The name of the Professor of the Institutes is already familiar to all who are versed in our cotemporary medical and biological literature; since, besides his well-deserved reputation as an [illegible] and [illegible] scientific lecturer, he has been, for a number of years, one of the most industrious and [illegible] of our medical ethnological authors.

Nor shall I speak with any less

confidence of the gentleman who holds the professorship of Anatomy: who is a graduate of this school in its best days; and who adds to a most thorough acquaintance with all the departments of his subject, the rare power to render ~~their~~ mastery ~~acquisition~~ by others agreeable and interesting; — and an appreciation of what is too often neglected, — the value of the comparison of the structures of the lower animals, ~~for~~ illustration of the laws of conformation of the human body, in health and disease.

After this clear and direct statement of conviction ~~that~~ they, gentlemen, it is obvious to my mind, as I would wish it to be also to yours, that, if there be anything ~~wrong~~ wanting to the full efficiency of the Medical Teaching, the fault of this Institution, — the deficiency is not in my colleagues. I am brought, therefore, to enter, now with whatever misgiving, upon the subject of the course to which the remarks of this hour are announced as introductory; upon the Practice of Medicine.